



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

VA

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

# Job Search Guide

*Developed for*  
VHA Health Professions Trainees

[www.USAJOBS.gov](http://www.USAJOBS.gov)

# Job Search Guide for VHA Health Professions Trainees

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**Dear**  
**VHA Health**  
**Professions**  
**Trainee,**



Thank you for your dedication to America’s Heroes and for allowing the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to help advance your professional skills! Please consider applying these advanced skills to improve Veteran care as an employee of VA once you finish your program. A career in VA offers graduating trainees an opportunity to work in a collegial and collaborative environment while enjoying unmatched work-life balance.

VA’s TakeACloserLook@VA (TACLVA) program is an ongoing recruitment campaign that connects you with VA Recruiters and allows you to learn more about how you can serve Veterans at VA. Be sure to check out [www.vacareers.va.gov](http://www.vacareers.va.gov) to stay current on all things VA.

We invite you to review the job search tips we have provided in this guide. This information will help you navigate your future transition into the VA workforce.

Good luck!

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# VA Hiring Process Overview



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VA is a Federal agency which uses various hiring authorities established by law when staffing vacancies. The most commonly used hiring authorities for healthcare occupations in VA are Title 38 and Hybrid Title 38. Title 5 is the hiring authority used for other occupations in VA.

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## Title 38

Title 38 is used for appointment of Physicians, Dentists, Podiatrists, Optometrists, Chiropractors, Nurses, Nurse Anesthetists, Physician Assistants, and Expanded-Function Dental Auxiliaries (EFDAs).

These appointments are made based on an individual's qualifications and professional attainments in accordance with standards that have been established by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Appointments may be either full-time, part time, or intermittent and either permanent or temporary. Full-time permanent appointments under Title 38 are subject to a 2-year probationary period. Title 38 employees are provided with a functional statement, scope of practice or privileges which provides the major duties and responsibilities for the position.



## Hybrid Title 38

Hybrid Title 38 employees are employed under a combination of both Title 5 and Title 38 laws.

Hybrid Title 38 occupations include (but are not limited to):

- 1 **Psychologist,**
- 2 **Certified/Registered Respiratory Therapist,**
- 3 **Physical Therapist,**
- 4 **Occupational Therapist,**
- 5 **Pharmacist,**
- 6 **Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse, etc.**

Hybrid Title 38 employees are covered by Title 38 for appointment, advancement, and certain pay matters, and Title 5 for performance appraisal, leave, hours of duty, adverse actions, probationary period, reemployment rights, reduction-in-force, and retirement. Appointments may be either full-time, part time, or intermittent and either permanent or temporary. Hybrid Title 38 employees typically serve a one-year probationary period. Hybrid Title 38 employees are provided with a functional statement which provides the major duties and responsibilities for the position.

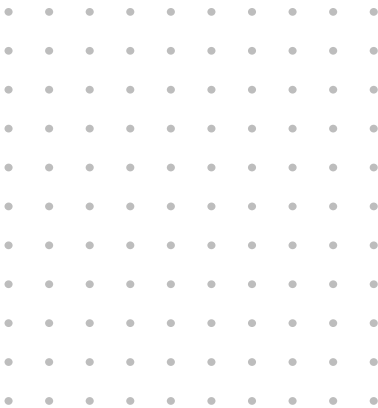
# Title 5

Title 5 employees are subject to all regulatory and legal provisions governing employees in the Competitive Service. Examples of positions under Title 5 include Program Analyst, Police Officer, Human Resources Specialists, Program Support Assistant, etc. Appointments may be either full-time, part time, or intermittent and either permanent or temporary. Title 5 Employees typically serve a 1-year probationary period. Title 5 employees are provided a position description (PD) which identifies the major duties and responsibilities for the position. PD's are reviewed as needed to ensure they accurately reflect the duties of the position.

No matter the occupation or hiring authority, there are flexibilities available for VA to use in hiring and attracting current or former VHA Health Professions Trainees. However, Veteran's preference procedures and local bargaining agreement job posting requirements must always be followed even when considering someone non-competitively.

Trainees should begin reaching out to VAMCs for employment once they're within 6-12 months from completing their programs. It is best to network with the appropriate hiring manager(s) and local HR staff at the VAMC(s) you are interested in.

We also recommend that you build a profile at [www.usajobs.gov](http://www.usajobs.gov) and establish a "job search agent" and set it for daily delivery. This will enable USAJOBS to send you email notifications when positions are announced that match your search criteria (keywords, geographic interests, etc.).





If a position is announced externally at USAJOBS, VA trainees are only eligible to be considered for those positions that specify the area of consideration as open to current and/or former trainees or as open to “US Citizens” in the “Who May Apply” section of the announcement. Positions advertised to “Status Eligibles” are only open to current/former federal employees and certain Veterans. VA trainees are not typically eligible for “status eligible” jobs unless they meet the specific criteria to be a “Status Eligible”. VA trainees are also not typically eligible to be considered for positions advertised for “INTERNAL” VA employees only since trainees are on temporary, time-limited appointments and not considered part of the permanent employee/internal workforce.

At a minimum VA trainees will want to involve the following individuals in their job search:

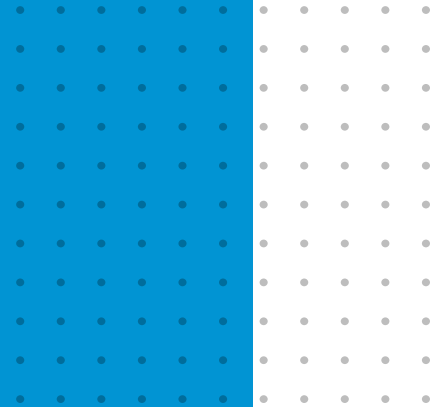
- 1 **VA recruiters aligned to Centers of Excellence (COE) specialty teams you are interested in;**
- 2 **Hiring Managers;**
- 3 **Local Facility Recruitment Liaisons (FRL);**
- 4 **Local HR Staffing and Recruitment Specialists; and**
- 5 **Residency/Training Directors.**

The resources identified at the end of this document will aid you in seeking employment in VA. Should you need additional assistance, please email [trainee.recruitment@va.gov](mailto:trainee.recruitment@va.gov).





# Resume/ Curriculum Vitae (CV) Tips





## Standard Resume/

### CV Format:

- Contact Information
- A Traditional CV starts with education
- Professional Experience (Make sure to include if the position was Full-Time or Part-Time and hours worked.  
**For example: Full Time (40 hrs/week).**
- Licenses (if applicable), or the date licensure will be granted, if pending
- Certifications (if applicable)
- Memberships (if applicable)
- Additional Information
- Published Material & Presentations (if applicable)
- References

### Okay to Include:

- Honors
- Special skills
- Language proficiency
- Hobbies
- Always note if references are available or include a list of references

### Presentation of your Resume/CV:

- Relevant to the position
- Chronological
- Send as an email attachment
- If sending printed file, do not use colored paper, but any weight is fine
- Leave out the fancy fonts, format and tables
- No images
- Use a separate document for listing publications and/or research
- Spell-Check

### Cover letters:

- Always personalize to organization and/or a person
- State why you are interested in the specific position or location
- Include as attachment with your CV or as the body of the email



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## Tips for **USAJOBS.GOV**

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### Understanding Vacancy Announcements

Vacancy announcements provide information to potential applicants about positions being advertised. While they might look different from Federal agency to Federal agency, the content should be similar.

The types of information that will be included in the vacancy announcements:



1

**Position Title**

The Position title provides the official position title for the position being advertised.

2

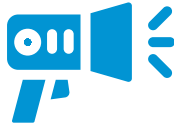
**Series and Grade**

The series and grade provides information on the occupational series used in the Federal Government for positions and the grade level that has been assigned to the position. All positions in the Federal Government have a position title and a four-digit occupational series number.

3

**Salary Range**

The salary range provides the range of salaries for the grades of the position being advertised.



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6

7

### Location of Position

The location of the position provides the name of the location, the city and state where the position is located

### Announcement Number

The announcement number provides the announcement number for the position being advertised. Each position has a different announcement number.

### Opening and Closing Dates

The opening and closing dates provide the opening and closing dates for the announcement. If your application is late you will probably be excluded from consideration during the initial round of applications. If this is the case, you may wish to contact the hiring manager as well as the HR office and indicate that you realize the opportunity closed. Once the selecting official considers all applicants that applied, if a vacancy still exists, since this is a non-competitive hiring authority, a manager and HR may hire a candidate who will be fully qualified at the expected date of hire.



8

## Area of Consideration

This indicates the area from which applications will be accepted. For example, if the area of consideration is:

- a. **"All US Citizens"** - all U.S. citizens are eligible to apply
- b. **"All US Citizens In The Local Commuting Area"** - only those US citizens within the particular commuting area would be considered. The geographic area will vary depending on the location of the Facility. There is no mileage standard for the VA, however, the announcement will define the local commuting area for that position.
- c. **"VA Employees Only"** - only current permanent VA employees may apply (VHA trainees are considered temporary and are not eligible when the area of consideration is "Internal VA employees".

9

## Duties

This item describes the main duties and responsibilities for the position being advertised.

10

## Qualifications

The qualifications section describes the main qualification requirements for the position being advertised.

# 11

## Application Information

Lists what must be included in your application package for you to be eligible for consideration. You may also locate your [supporting COE VA recruiter](#) and request their assistance.

# 12

## Contact Information

Contains information that can be used if you have a question about the position or your application.

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## QUICK LINKS TO TRAINEE RECRUITMENT RESOURCES

[Hiring Health Professions Trainees Flyer with HR Tips](#)

[Myth Busters FAQ](#)

[Trainee Recruitment Website](#)





## Submitting the Application

To apply for Federal positions advertised at **[www.USAJOB.S.gov](http://www.USAJOB.S.gov)**, you can apply online according to the announcement's instructions.

If you encounter issues uploading your package, please contact the Point of Contact listed on the job announcement for guidance and assistance.

You can also apply for positions by working with your **supporting COE VA recruiter**.

When applying online, you will be directed to the "application manager" where you will be asked to respond to an online questionnaire. Please ensure accurate and truthful answers here as some negative responses may result in your application not being considered.

If you're in a healthcare occupation that requires licensure and the licensure question in the online questionnaire states "do you have a current full and unrestricted license to practice medicine from a US State or Territory" or something similar, you should contact the point of contact on the announcement and let them know you are on track to complete your program and become licensed and therefore you should be allowed to apply.

## What Happens Next

If you applied online via [www.USAJOB.gov](http://www.USAJOB.gov), you should see email correspondence confirming receipt of your online application.

Once the Human Resources (HR) Department reviews your application, they will determine whether you are qualified and will send you a 2<sup>nd</sup> email notice. This 2<sup>nd</sup> notice will either state you have been qualified and referred for consideration or that you have been determined to be disqualified along with the reason.

If you were disqualified and you feel you are indeed qualified, you should:

- 1 Contact the HR Point of Contact on the announcement; and**
- 2 Notify Your Supporting COE VA Recruiter.**

## Interviews

Interviews are scheduled and conducted, references are checked, and final candidate selections are made.

VA uses a Performance Based Interview Process. Use the VA Careers [preparing for interview](#) resource to help you prepare.

The recruitment and selection process may take several weeks from the time a position is advertised to when a selection is made. Don't be deterred by this. Ask questions and keep in touch during the application process.

## On-Boarding

- 1 You will be notified via email from the USAJOBS System once a final determination has been made. **If you are a physician who was selected for an opportunity the next stage in the process will be for the VA Medical Center to prepare a recommendation for your official VA salary. This formal process considers your credentials, local labor market salaries, the needs of the medical center, and other factors.**
- 2 Once the Medical Center Director signs the paperwork, HR will then provide you a written offer with the approved salary and any approved incentives being offered (recruitment/relocation incentive, education debt reduction program, etc.). **If you are in a non-physician healthcare occupation, your grade and corresponding salary will either be set by the Selecting Official and Human Resources or by a professional standards board, depending on the occupational series you are being appointed. If you are a Title 5 employee (administrative non-healthcare positions), your grade and salary is based on your qualifications and the grade level of the position you were selected for.**
- 3 Upon selection, the appointment process will begin which may include additional requirements and submission of documents related credentialing as well as pre-employment physical exam.
- 4 Once the appointment process is successfully completed, a formal offer of employment will be made which will include the salary offer and a date to enter on duty. **Candidates currently employed should not give notice of employment until a formal offer of employment with VA occurs.**

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## Job Search Tips

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- Contact your **COE VA recruiter** and provide your resume/CV, detailed geographic preferences and availability timeframe.
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- Create a profile at **[www.USAJOBS.gov](http://www.USAJOBS.gov)** and upload your resume/CV there.
- 
- Create a “Job Search Agent” based on your specific specialty and detailed geographic preferences and set it up for daily delivery.
- 
- Follow “How to Apply” instructions in each announcement you apply for.
- 
- Contact the POC listed in the announcement if you have questions or concerns.
- 
- If you’re in a healthcare occupation that requires licensure and the language in the announcement and/or online assessment questionnaire stipulates a current full and unrestricted license is required, please contact your **supporting COE VA recruiter** and/or the HR POC listed in the announcement and advise them the announcement and/or questionnaire incorrectly eliminates current trainees from consideration and should be fixed according to the “Hiring VA Trainees (5-12-2015)” flier and “HR Questions Answers (5-19-2015)” Q&A.

# 4

## Interview Tips

Sample Questions that may be asked  
during your interview process



TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT VA



## During the Interview

- 1 What are your department's biggest challenges?
- 2 What are the department's future plans? Expansion?
- 3 What is the philosophy of the leadership team?
- 4 What, if any, administrative duties will be expected of me?
- 5 What is the next step in the hiring process?



## After the Interview

- 1 Contact the Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Offices, and realtors
- 2 Spend time looking at neighborhoods to get a feel for housing prices
- 3 Meet school principals or leaders and ask about their statistics, strengths and extracurricular activities
- 4 Look up school report cards online
- 5 Work with your recruiter to ensure you have all the necessary details to make a decision



# 5

## Networking Tips

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### Social Networking

If using personal social media in conjunction with your job search, be mindful of content viewable by potential employers.



#### LinkedIn

Profile with keywords, grow your network, niche group membership.



#### Twitter

Twitter Chats, #WorkatVA, @JobsatVA, VAMC handles, etc.



#### Facebook

VA Careers, local VAMC pages, FacebookLive events, etc.



#### VA

VA blog, VA Pulse



## Potential Person-Person Networking

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### COE VA Recruiter(s)

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#### **Local Facility Recruitment Liaison (FRL)**

This individual typically works in HR and is the local point of contact on mission-critical recruitment. They perform traditional recruitment activities such as attending career fairs, networking with affiliates, placing external job ads, sourcing candidates, screening and referring candidates, etc. Ask the local HR Office if they have a FRL on staff and then reach out to this individual requesting consideration for current/future non-competitive hiring options.

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#### **Local Service Line Managers and Section Chiefs**

Makes the hiring decision and manages FTE levels

- Express an interest in non-competitive hire – make a business case
- Let them know all the local/regional duty locations you are willing to work at – this could increase the likelihood they would offer you a future position

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#### **HR Staff**

HR Staffing Specialist(s) supporting the service line(s) you wish to work in

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#### **Contemporaries**

Fellow VA trainees and other students

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#### **Medical Staff**

Staff at the VA Medical Center – especially those you know

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#### **Executive Staff**

University Training Program Director

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#### **Education Staff**

Designated Education Officer at the VA Medical Center you wish to work at





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